

For Immediate Release:  
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## **California Resources Secretary Announces Vision for Sustainable Forests**

*Budget Proposal Places Priority on Sound Environmental Standards and  
Fire Protection in Forest Management Practices*

(SACRAMENTO) – California Resources Secretary Mike Chrisman today announced a budget proposal for Timber Harvest Plans (THP) that will ensure sustainable forest practices, enhance fire protection for rural communities, defend California's most important environmental priorities, and maintain the strongest environmental protections in the nation.

"California's forests are working landscapes that support our local economies and define a way of life for many Californians. But, two of the largest threats to these forests are catastrophic wildfire and the conversion of our forests to vineyards and residential estates," said Secretary Chrisman. "Because of rising regulatory costs and a downturn in the timber economy, more and more forestland is slated for sale across the state, and many of the large timber landholdings in California are threatened with fragmentation and development."

The proposal establishes a fee to cover part of the state's costs for reviewing timber harvesting plans, a new process for timber management that creates a broader, longer-term agreement for the responsible and sustainable management of California's private timberlands that will lead to tangible environmental benefits on the ground as well as economic benefits by encouraging sustainable forestry practices and watershed-scale cumulative analysis. In addition, the proposal increases the minimum parcel size for management of residential or commercially zoned forest lands allowing local communities and local governments to work with small forest landowners (less than 3 acres) to reduce catastrophic wildfires.

"This budget proposal focuses on sustainable management of forest resources, including replanting trees, wildlife habitat, native plant species, watersheds and water quality; provides sustainable funding of state environmental reviews; and nourishes rural economies," Secretary Chrisman said. "This proposal will also help accelerate timber management activities by alleviating bureaucratic red tape, control how much can be harvested and follow a closely monitored audit process with an appropriate sunset time period."

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This action provides reforms that preserve California's high level of protection for forests. It will maintain environmental review by state agencies charged with protecting wildlife and water quality and continue to allow for public comment and input. It will implement best management practices for protection of watersheds, water, soil stability, forest productivity, and wildlife. The budget proposal also maintains the authority of the Department of Fish and Game and the state's Regional Water Quality Control Boards to ensure that timber harvest plans fully protect water quality and species consistent with SB 810 (Burton) in 2003.

The action the Secretary envisions expands the number of forest owners (from owners of 2,500 to 10,000 acres) that qualify as non-industrial tree farmers. Under the plan, qualifying owners must submit a timber management plan consistent with CEQA and must follow sustainable forest practices. This action provides greater regulatory certainty in exchange for managing almost 1.5 million acres of land through selective harvesting methods. This action increases by almost 18 percent California's private commercial tree lands that must use sustainable forestry practices.

Larger landowners must agree to abide by sustainable and responsible forest management standards required by a third party certification program and annual environmental performance audits in order to be allowed an opportunity for longer-term management plans. The state, the public, and the environment will benefit by having management plans that provide larger-scale analysis of the cumulative impacts of forest management activities on a watershed level.

The state budget funds activities that enforce existing environmental protection laws through the programs within the Resources Agency, Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF), and the Department of Fish and Game.

CDF's General Fund expenditures were reduced by \$10 million in the 2003 Budget Act in anticipation of a new fee for THP reviews to partially cover the cost of these reviews. THP fees, however, were not enacted, which created a shortfall of \$10 million. As part of the budget, the Resources Agency is proposing legislation to make the necessary changes to enact the THP fees to cover the shortfall.

For more information on Timber Harvest Plans go to:  
<http://www.fire.ca.gov/ResourceManagement/THinCA.asp>

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